

# Life as an International Student at Iwate University

—Memories of Youth; Eternal Affinity—



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Completed in Mar. 2002

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From the bottom of my heart, I would like to congratulate Iwate University and the wonderful faculty who work there on their 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I am looking forward to the next 70 years of progress from Iwate University.

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019, a round-table conference for Iwate University International Exchange Graduates was held at the Yanyuan Hotel at Fudan University, located in Shanghai. I was selected as an Iwate University Global Fellow, and I accepted a Global Fellow award at the event. I was very happy to see a member of the committee that reviewed my doctoral dissertation, Professor Iwabuchi, who is the current president of Iwate University. I was also able to reunite with friends that I had made during my time as an exchange student. In that moment, the green pastures of Koiwai Farms, the swans of Takamatsu Pond, the beautiful Cherry Blossom trees on campus, and the faces of the teachers who earnestly supported me through my research rushed into my mind. I consider Morioka my second “home town”, and Iwate University as my alma mater. I have

seen Morioka and Iwate University so many times I have lost count; briefly, all I want to say is “thank you” .

In October of 1997, my younger self wandered into Japan, of which I had long held in adoration, and entered the Applied Molecular Chemistry Department, and became a member of Iwate University. I was a graduate student, working in the Mori (Shigeyuki) laboratory. From there, I completed my Doctoral program, and continued working on projects as a JSPS researcher.

Then, in May of 2005, I began working at Fudan University in China as part of the Department of Polymer Science. I was given the incredible opportunity to teach my students about the fun of research and the joys of life, the same way Dr. Mori had taught me. In addition, I promote projects as the deputy director of the “National Key Laboratory of Polymer Engineering and Molecular Processing” .

I have been working in Applied Molecular Chemistry for over 8 years. As I write this, the 4-story Applied Molecular Chemistry Department building, the flowers in the courtyard, the advanced equipment in the regional joint research center, and the faces of my dear colleagues, who I am honored to have laughed and worried together with over the years, spin around in my head. I want to talk about how these various feelings have meshed together to leave a lasting impression within me.

On October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1997, I knew very little about Japan, even less about Japanese, and with anticipation and anxiety constricting my chest, I arrived in Morioka aboard the Shinkansen. I was assigned to study tribology at the Mori (Shigeyuki) Lab. In the first 3 months, I was unable to perform experiments, or even interact with anyone in the laboratory; I was nervous, and ended up gaining 5

kilograms. One day, one of my group members, Mr. Ikari, said, “I will make the sample for you tomorrow!” At about 7am the next morning, I was absolutely moved to see him making LB membranes for me. From then on, my research gradually grew easier; my colleagues would teach me experiment procedures and how to use different lab equipment. One person I cannot thank enough is Miki Takahashi, another graduate student, who took many days out of their busy life to revise my very first journal article in Japanese, word by word.

Among all the members of Mori Laboratory, the person who left the strongest impact within me has to be research assistant Ms. Hojo. She caringly and politely explained things to me when I completely didn't understand. I can still remember the all the years of delicious stew we would eat before our conferences, the taste of the chestnut rice we brought to our Hanami picnics, or the smell of the stews at our cookouts, as if they all happened yesterday. She provided a motherly warmth for me, who was separated from their family. Whenever I had problems, Ms. Hojo was always there to listen. By seeing her wonderful, smiling face, my problems, little by little, would disappear.

At the end of 2001, I was worrying about what I was to do after finishing my Doctorate. After discussing it with Prof. Mori, I decided to apply to become a JSPS researcher. For 8 years, from graduate student to JSPS researcher, I am truly indebted to Prof. Mori for working with me for such a long time. I was not much of an honor student, but Prof. Mori would always encourage me by saying things like “Cóng, you can do it” , which gave me confidence in myself. Thanks to Prof. Mori, I published over 10 papers in international journals before I returned to China. Before I finished my doctoral program, I was both elated and

anxious to find out that I was going to have a child. I talked with Prof. Mori about my research, my child, and my future; I felt peace of mind when he said to me, “Congratulations, I’ ll support you” .

It has been 14 years since I have returned to China. Now, if I have any problems in my life or with my research, I always talk to Prof. Mori through e-mail. I frequently seek and take in the advice from my former teacher, Prof. Mori, like a daily multivitamin.

I cannot count the memories I have of Iwate University. The hard working technicians, the nice international teachers, the strict, yet interesting teachers..., the cherry blossom viewings, the summer baseball tournament, the fall cookout, the new year’ s party, the university festival, the firework display..., Appi Plateau and Lake Akan, the field trips to Toshiba and Shiseido, Iwate Park, with cherry blossom trees illuminated at night, or with fall colors that sway about in the wind...

Studying at Iwate University was and has been very important to me, both for my career and for my life. I am very grateful for my Alma Mater, and I want to live life day by day, and treasure what I have now. I look forward to the day when I can see you again.



Doctoral Course of Applied Molecular Chemistry Graduation Ceremony,  
with my former Professor, Dr. Shigeyuki Mori. (2002.03.23)



Foreign Exchange Student Graduation, At the Farewell Party.  
(2002.03)



As the Director of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of Molecular Engineering of Polymers. (2018.09.21)



At the Global Fellow Award Ceremony with President Iwabuchi (2019.03.09)